

10
A New-Years-Gift to Youth.

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SERMON

Preach'd at Leicester,

January the 1st, 1713.

To Young PERSONS.

By **JOHN GREENE.**

L O N D O N :

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T O

Matthew Simons, *Esq;*

S I R,

I *Am apt to think, that there is not a greater Difference in the Life that now is, between one Christian and another, than there will be in that which is to come. Some are in a higher, others in a lower Station here; so will it be hereafter.*

And certainly the present State is not a Pattern of the future. Some that serve God in this, in a mean Condition, shall enjoy him in the other, in the highest Mansions of Bliss. Their light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. And so on the other hand: Some that are high here, shall be

D E D I C A T I O N.

low there. They shall be saved; yet so as by Fire: And they shall suffer Loss; the Loss of those heights of Heaven, that others reach. And as to many, they may keep the same Rank and Order, when they come to the World above, that they were in while here below.

It hath pleased God, Sir, to place you high: You have a Name among the Mighties; and among the first Three, rather than the Thirty. God hath lengthened out your Life to a good Old Age; given you a plentiful Estate: And few have that Honour that you have; that true Honour, that flows from personal and real Worth; and which not only challenges outward Respect, but commands from the Beholders an inward Veneration and Esteem. That SIMPLICITY and GODLY SINCERITY, in which, by the Grace of God, you have had your Conversation in the World: That great WISDOM and PRUDENCE, you have made full proof of, in managing the Concerns of this Life: Your happy and uncommon DEXTERITY, in preventing and making up of Differences between Neighbours: The SWEETNESS and GOODNESS

of

DEDICATION.

of your TEMPER: Your HUMBLE and AFFABLE CARRIAGE to the Meanest: Your CHARITY to the Poor: And (in a word) your EMINENT USEFULNESS, not only to private Persons, but the whole Country, have given you a Name better than precious Ointment, and your Memory will be blessed.

It shou'd therefore, Sir, be your Care to be as Great and High, above other Christians in the future and eternal State, as you are in *this*.

You have laid a solid Foundation for that, in the early Dedication of your self to God; which, in the following Discourse, I am teaching and perswading YOUTH to do.

Wherefore, leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, go on unto Perfection; coveting earnestly the best Gifts; *the most lively, vigorous, flaming Graces; always abounding in the Fruits of Righteousness; and diligently improving the Talents God has intrusted you with, for the advancing his Interest in the World, and for the good of others; those especially that are of the Household of Faith.* For So
an

DEDICATION.

an Entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly into the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *And you shall shine there as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.*

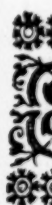
That God wou'd prolong your Life for farther Service; that his Mercy and Goodness may follow you to the end of it; and that, when your Work is done, you may be counted worthy of this high Calling, is the hearty Prayer of,

HONOURED SIR,

Your most Obedient Servant
in the Lord,

JOHN GREENE.

Prov.



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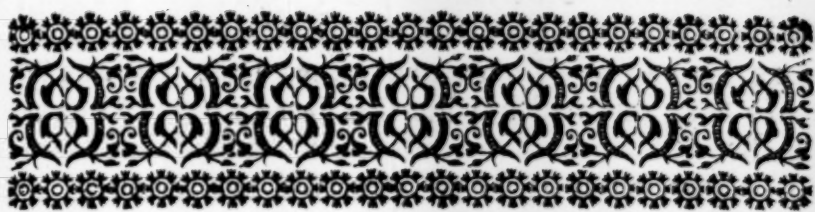
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Prov. xxiii. 26.

My Son, give me thine Heart.

IN this Book, *Solomon* has his Eye on *Young Persons*, he design'd it chiefly for their Use and Instruction, to give to the *YOUNG Man Knowledge and Discretion*, Chap. i. 4. *Proverbs* are general Rules of Life, gather'd from Observation and Experience, comprised in short and pithy Sentences, that they may the more easily be remembred, and be the readier to be put in practice: And tho' they may *indeed* be serviceable to all, yet, it is certain, *Young Persons* have the *most* Occasion for them, having made the *least* Observation themselves, and having the *least* Experience of their own. And there's no doubt but the *Wise Man* makes use of the words, *My Son*, so frequently as he does in this Book, to stir up *Young Persons* to hearken diligently to what he says. I shall therefore take it for granted, that he speaks to *such* in the Text, and in this View shall I consider it.

The Person speaking, is *Solomon*; but he speaks in *God's Name*, and as his *Ambassador*: He seeks not your Hearts for *himself*, but for *God*. And we also are *Ambassadors for God*, as tho' *God* did beseech you by us, we pray you to give him your Hearts. This is the Errand I now come upon: This the Message
I am

I am in *God's Name* to deliver to the *Youth* of this Congregation. *Unto you, O Young Persons, do I call, and my Voice is to the Children of Man, GIVE GOD YOUR HEARTS.* There are none, that are *on the Lord's side*, but will bid me *God-speed* in this Work. I shall,

I. Shew what it is to *give God our Hearts.*

II. Lay before you some *Rules* to be observ'd in the doing of this. And

III. Endeavour, by some proper *Arguments*, to persuade you to it.

1. I am to shew you what it is to *give God our Hearts.*

The *Heart* is put figuratively for the *whole Man*; and therefore to *give God our Hearts*, is the same with the *giving our selves* to him: Which is what he expressly requires, *Rom. 6. 13. Yield your selves unto God.*

Three things this may imply,

First, To give our Hearts to God, or, which is all one, to *give our selves to God*, is to give him our *highest and best Affections*: It is to *Love GOD* with all our *Heart*, and with all our *Soul*, and with all our *Mind*. When we look on *GOD* as the *Chief Good*, as the *Fountain of all Good*, and esteem him above all *Things*, above all the *World*, above *Life* it self, and desire him more than all, and are for cleaving to him, as our *Rest* and *Portion*, our *Happiness*, our *All*, we have given him our *Hearts*. And

This is *what God* calls for from *Young Persons* in the Text. *My Son, give me thine Heart*; give me thy *Love*: *GOD* wou'd have *this*, who *best* deserves it. He wou'd have you *Love Him* above all; He will bear no *Rival*; Nothing must come in *Competition* with him for your *Love*; He must have the *highest Place* in your *Hearts*, and other things must bow to him, and be lov'd no more than he allows of.

This

This is the first and great Commandment. And, which is the Fruit of this,

Secondly, To give God our Hearts, or, to give our selves to him, is, to be at his Service; it is to be his willing People, willing to serve him to the utmost, and to make it our main business to please him. This is join'd with the Love of God, Deut. 10. 12. And to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul.

*Be not deceived, God is not mocked: He has not your highest and best Affections, if you are not his Servants. He has your Love, to whom you yield your selves Servants to obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness. What! Love God, and not be for serving Him! It is impossible. There can be no true Love to God, where there is no sincere Obedience. If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, John 14. 23. We do but Complement God, in saying, we love Him above all, when we are not for serving Him above all. We may speak our Neighbour fair, when he is Cold and Hungry, but if we give him not those things which are needful to the Body, what doth it profit? We do but prove our selves Hypocrites. In like manner, we may speak God fair, and tell him, we love him above all; but if we are not for pleasing him above all, what doth it profit? What signify such empty Professions of our Love? Can it be suppos'd, the Searcher of Hearts shou'd believe us? You may as well talk of a Spring that sends forth no Water, as of Love to God in one that is not at his Service. So that this is another thing God calls for from young Persons in the Text, *My Son, give me thine Heart*; that is, do you be at my Service. Your Souls shou'd answer, *O Lord, truly I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant. You shou'd yield your selves Servants to God. Submit to God, as your rightful Sovereign and Lord: Let his Spirit be your Guide, his Word**

your *Rule*, his *Glory* your *End*, and resolve to live to him. Thus it will be, if God has your *Hearts*.

Thirdly, To give God our *Hearts*, or to give our selves to him, is to be *entirely* at his *disposal*; 'tis to say in sincerity, *Here I am*, let God do with me as he pleases; *not my Will, but his be done*: *The Lord shall choose my Inheritance for me*.

We are not at God's *Service*, if we are not willing and desirous to be at his *Disposal*. The *Flesh* may be for murmuring at the Determinations of God concerning us; but if we are his *Servants*, the *Spirit*, the *Grace* of God in the Soul, will desire to submit to them, and to be well satisfied with them all. Obedience to God is *Passive*, as well as *Active*; and when God in his *Providence* says, *Be this, or be that*; *Stand thou there* in that *difficult Post*, or *sit thou here* in this *low Place*, and our *Hearts* say *No*; there is the same Rebellion against his Will, as when he says, *Do this, or do that*, and we tell him, *We will not*. We set up our own *Humours* and *Inclinations* for our *Rule*; in opposition to God, and his *Law*, just as much in *one Case*, as we do in the *other*. And therefore, *the not being at God's Disposal*, argues the want of *Love* to him, as well as *the not being at his Service*.

This then is another thing which God requires of *Young Persons* in the Text: *My Son, give me thine Heart*; be willing to be what God wou'd have thee to be; to be in that State and Condition in the World, that God sees fit to put thee into: Say, with respect to his *Providences*, as well as *Precepts*, *Not my Will, O Lord, but thine be done*.

Thus you see the Meaning of the *Phrase* in the Text, *Give me thine Heart*: It is as much as to say, Give God your Souls; *Yield your selves* to him; Love God above all; *Serve* him above all; and be willing that he shou'd do with you, as seemeth him good. I am

2. To lay before you some *Rules* to be observ'd in the giving your *Hearts* to God.

This is a *Business* of great *Importance*, and therefore we had need take care about doing it. If this be not *well done*, nothing else in Religion can be *so*. The Building can't be as it shou'd be, when there is an *Error* in the *Foundation*. Let the *first Rule* therefore be this :

1st, Do not set about this in your *own Strength*, but look to God to assist you by his Spirit, in the giving your *Hearts* to him. *We are not sufficient of our selves to think any thing,* 2 Cor. 3. 5. *as of our selves, but our Sufficiency is of God.* You must be *sensible* of this, and pray, that God wou'd undertake for you, and work in you to will, and to do of his good pleasure. Never is any Duty so well done, as when we have the most affecting Apprehensions of our own Weakness, and the greatest Dependance, in the doing it, on God, and his Grace. The Reason of this is obvious; *God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble,* Jam. 4. 6.

It is a *Token* for Good, that you will indeed give your *Hearts* unto God, when setting about this, you say within your selves, 'Lord, I know not how to give my Heart unto thee; said I wou'd be thine; I wou'd now become thine by my own *Act* and *Deed*; but such is the Treachery and Baseness of this wicked Heart of mine, that I fear it will deceive me; I dare not trust it: Lord! do thou help me by thy Grace; be surety for thy Servant for good; Oh! make me willing, heartily willing, to be thine; let me be sincere in what I am now doing; let my Heart be right with thee, and steadfast in thy Covenant: My Eyes are unto thee, O Lord God! be merciful to me, and work in me that which is well-pleasing in thy sight: In thee do I trust; let me not be ashamed: It is (I say) a

Token for Good to us, where this is the *Language* of our Souls.

It may be, there's more need to take notice of this to Young Persons, than others; because, generally speaking, they have had the least Experience of the Corruption and Deceitfulness of their own Hearts, and so are most apt to trust in Themselves, and in their own Strength. Do you see, that you depend on God for the Assistance of his Grace, in this Work, the *giving your Heart: to him.* And then,

2dly, Depend on the *Merits* and *Mediation* of *Christ Jesus* for your *Acceptance* in it. Of all those *Gifts*, that we present to God, *this* of our *Hearts* is the most pleasing to him; He prefers this to all *Burnt Offerings*, and *Sacrifices*; 'tis of more Value with him, than *Thousands of Rams*, or *Ten Thousands of Rivers of Oil*: But even *this Gift* will be an *Abomination* to him, and go up as an ill Savour into his *Nostrils*, if it is not presented with an Eye to *Christ*, and perfumed with the Incense of his Merits. *Whatever ye do* (says the *Apostle*, Col. 3. 17.) *in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.* By him let us offer the *Sacrifice of Praise* to God, Heb. 13. 15. There is the same Reason, that by him we shou'd offer our Selves to God.

When doing this, you shou'd say, 'Here, Lord, 'I come to make a *Deed of Gift* of my self to thee; 'I come to offer thee my Love, my Service; all I 'can do, all I am, and all I have: But will God 'be pleased with me? Will he regard my Person? 'So base, so vile a Present is this, that it is not 'in the least fit for, or worthy of thine *Acceptance*: But for *Christ's* sake, for thy *Son's* sake, 'for the sake of his most precious Blood, his 'Death and Sufferings, his Merits and Intercession, let me find Grace in thy Sight, O Lord! 'and receive this at my hand. Thus must you

Plead

Plead with God, when you give him your Hearts.

3dly, You must *give your Hearts your selves to God*, in the most *Serious and Solemn* manner. Nothing calls for a greater *Composure* of Mind, than this does; if ever we shou'd be *serious*, we shou'd be so when we are doing *this*. *This*, the *Giving our Hearts to God*, is a Business of the greatest Moment and Importance of any whatever; and a trifling careless Temper very ill becomes those that are engaging in it. 'If I shou'd mistake here, (may your Souls say) 'and deceive my self in this 'matter, and think that I have given my Heart 'to God, when I have not done it, I may be miserable to all Eternity; and shall I not be very *serious*, and *in earnest*, when about this?

Men do not *trifle*, are not *careless*, when they make their *Wills*, and dispose of their *Estates*; witness the *awful* Preface to them, *IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN*; and shall there be any thing like *Trifling* and *Carelessness*, when you are disposing of your Souls, which are more worth than all the World? Those know not what they are doing, who are not *Serious* in this, and do not stir up every Power, ever Faculty, to assist them in it. All that *Lightness*, which is so common in *Youth*, shou'd be laid aside, when you go about this work.

4thly, Let this be done *Considerately* and *Advisedly*: You must neither act *rashly* nor *blindly* in this Affair: It must be the Result of your *Calm* and *Sober* Thoughts, and a *Rational* and *Prudent* Action. *Young* Persons are apt to go *hand over head*, as we say; too too often they are govern'd by *Passion*, and not considering the Nature and Circumstances of what they are doing, they *repent* of it, many times, as soon as they have done it. Let it not be so here: And therefore *sit down first*, and count the *Cost*, whether you have *sufficient* to finish it. Weigh things

things well with your selves, in the Ballance of Right Reason, and in the Ballance of the Sanctuary: Think what it is to be the Lord's; consider the Troubles and Difficulties, as well as Pleasures and Rewards, that are like to follow your *giving your Hearts to God*; and so conclude upon doing it. Blessed be God, we need not fear recommending Consideration to you in this matter; for the Odds is apparently on the side of Religion; and Arguments there are for this, abundantly outweigh all that can be said to the contrary. We shall lay them before you in their proper place: You must take a view of them, and from a sense of their force, *give your Hearts unto God*; that you may act, *not as Fools, but as Wise*.

5thly, See that you be *sincere* in the *giving your Hearts unto God*. You cannot deceive God: He *searcheth all Hearts*, and *tryeth the Reins*, and fully knows what you do in this matter: But take care you do not deceive your selves. *The* Jer. 17. 9. *Heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* And therefore this Caution is not needless.

To prevent all Mistakes, see

1. That your Heart be *taken off* from all those things, which hitherto have had Possession of it. There must be a renouncing of all the *Idols* you have set up, and worshipped; you must say in your Hearts, *What have I to do any more with Idols?*

You must *worship the Lord your God*, and Mat. 4. 10. *him only* must you *serve*. There must be none to rival God: He alone must be your Sovereign; His Laws alone must you obey.

No Man can serve two Masters: for either Mat. 6. 24. *he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* To think to *halve* it between both, is Hypocritical, and to

no purpose. *Whosoever will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God, Jam. 4. 4.*

2. See that you *give your selves absolutely to God*, that you may be *sincere* in what you do. Let there be no manner of *Reserves*, or *Exceptions*, or *Limitations*, or *Conditions*, in this *Deed of Gift*, of your Hearts to God. Do not say within your selves, 'Lord! I will be thine, if thou wilt do *thus*, and *thus* for me; or if thou wilt put me only upon *such*, and *such* Service; so far I am willing to follow thee, but *no farther*: This I will do, but *not that*. Our Hearts are not *right with God*, where it is thus. But you shou'd be saying, 'Lord, *here I am!* I give my self to thee, *what would'st thou have me to do?* Or what would'st thou have me to be? Do with me even as thou pleasest; 'tis not for me to prescribe to thee, what thou should'st do with thine own: What God commands shall be done; what his Will is concerning me, (by the help of his Grace) shall be submitted to, without disputing. And, which this may imply,

3. That you may be *sincere* in *giving your Hearts to God*; see that you do it with a purpose never to *Reverse* the *Deed*. You must not leave to your selves a *Power of Revocation*: This will not stand with Sincerity. There must be a Desire and Resolution to be the Lord's *for Life*, nay, His *for ever*.

6thly, Be *free and hearty* in *giving your selves to the Lord*: Let this be done out of *Choice*; not *Grudgingly*, or of *Necessity*: for God 2 Cor. 9. 7. *loveth a chearful Giver*. You shou'd take pleasure in thinking of being *the Lord's*; you shou'd count it a *Mercy and Privilege* to be *his*, and that he does you a *Favour*, an *Honour*, in accepting of your Hearts; and give them to him *heartily, as unto the Lord*. If you find in your selves any *Backwardness*

ness to be *his*, be not easy under it; but earnestly pray to God, for his Grace, to *subdue* you to *himself*, making you *willing in the Day of his Power*.

7thly, *Give God your Hearts*, with *Shame, Humiliation*, and *Repentance*, for your Sin and Folly, in having so long with-held *them* from him. Don't think your being *Young*, is a satisfactory *Plea*, for having done *this* no sooner; but look on your selves as *verily Guilty* concerning this matter.

God had a *Right* to your *Hearts*, as soon as ever you came into the World; he *formed* them for *himself*; and it was fit his *Right* shou'd have been acknowledged by you, as soon as you were of Understanding to do it. All the while you have neglected this, you have been *Rebelling* against God: When therefore, by this means, you are returning to Him, and your Duty, 'tis absolutely necessary, that you *Repent* you of your *Wickedness*, saying, *What have I done?* that you be *asham'd* at the Thoughts of it, and *blush* to lift up your Face to God; and that with true *Contrition*, and Sorrow of Heart, you *smite upon your Breast*, crying out, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*, Luke 18. 13.

8thly, *Give your selves unto God*, without any delay. God calls not for your Promises of future Obedience; but Performance of present Duty. Now *arise, and be doing*. It has been put off too long already; put it off no longer. *The time past* of your Lives (I speak to the *Youngest*, who can understand the Meaning of what I say) *may suffice* you, to have walked in *Vanity* and *Sin*: The Day is too far gone already; *it is high time to awake out of sleep*, and let God have your Hearts.

We are *not to say* to our Neighbour, when he comes for his *Debts*, or asks us for an *Alms*, which his pressing Necessities loudly call for; Prov. 3. 28. *Go and come again, and to morrow I will give; when we have it by us!* And is it fit

fit to say *this* to God? *Delays* are implicit Denials, and so he understands them. He expects an immediate Answer to his calls. Now he says, *Seek ye my face*; and your Hearts shou'd readily return, *Thy face, Lord, will we seek.*

Lastly, *Give your Hearts to God*, so expressly, as that you may take notice of what you do; may never forget your having done it; and that the Remembrance of it, as long as you live, may be as a Spur to quicken you, to walk as those that are the Lord's.

It may be proper to do *this*, not only in Heart, but in Words: *Take with you Words, and turn to the Lord; say to him, Take away* Hos. 14. 2. *all Iniquity, and receive us graciously.*

And (as Mr. *Alleine*, and others advise) it may be very well to do *this* in Writing also. Subscribe with your Hand a Deed of Gift of your selves to God; and keep it by you, as a Memorial of what has pass'd between him and your Souls. In Mr. *Philip Henry's* Life, there is a Form of Words, in which *this* may run, which for its shortness and fulness, I shall transcribe: "I take God the
 " Father to be my chiefest Good, and highest End.
 " I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour.
 " I take God the Holy Ghost to be my Sanctifier,
 " Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. I take the Word
 " of God to be my Rule in all my Actions: And the
 " People of God to be my People in all Conditions.
 " I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the Lord,
 " my whole Self, all I am, all I have, and all I
 " can do. And this I do deliberately, sincerely,
 " freely and for ever, Amen. So say, and so do
 (as he us'd to tell his Children when they had repeated this) *and you are made for ever.*

I only add, having done this, having given God your Hearts. You wou'd do well to Seal the Deed in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,

as soon as you can do it with Knowledge and Understanding. *Every one having Knowledge and Understanding, entered into a Curse, and into an Oath, to walk in God's Law, &c.* This may be a means of furnishing you with Strength to make good your Engagements to God. And thus have I laid before you some Rules to be observ'd in the giving God your Hearts.

3. I am to endeavour, by some proper Arguments, to persuade you to give God your Hearts.

This is as necessary a part of my Discourse, as either of the former; nay, I am apt to think, the most necessary: For (generally speaking) we have more need of Quickning, than Instruction. And the words that have been spoken, will be the savour of Death unto Death; and not the savour of Life unto Life; unless it pleases God to open your Hearts, to attend to the things I have yet to offer to your serious Consideration.

'O Father of Spirits! who hast the Hearts of all in thine Hands, and turnest them whithersoever thou wilt, work mightily with this Word; do thou work, and who shall lett it?

There are three Notions that we may have of the Text, each of which is a Spring of Arguments, proper to persuade you to give God your Hearts. We may consider it either as a Command, or as a Counsel, or as a Request. God commands you to give him your Hearts; he counsels and advises you to this; and he also intreats and beseeches you to do it.

1st, You shou'd give God your Hearts, because he commands you to do it: *My Son, give me thine Heart.* There is Love and Tenderneſs in the Words; but there is also Authority; and 'tis Rebellion against Heaven, not to obey 'em. Let Youth, let Children consider this: The great Sovereign of the World, He who has all Power in his Hands, He who can strike you dead whenever he pleases; He, I say,

command

commands you to give him your Hearts; and dare you refuse?

Consider, 1. This is a *Reasonable Command*, and therefore It shou'd be obey'd; it is our *Reasonable Service*, to present our *Bodies*, our selves to God. Nothing more so. We owe our selves to him; and when we *give our selves to God*, we do but pay a just Debt. Consider, you that are Young, you are the Lord's by right: Are you not *his* that hath made you? Hath *the Potter* power over the *Clay* which he hath formed? And hath not God power over you, whom he has form'd? Are you not *his*, who preserves you in Life, in whom you live, and move, and have your being? And is it not Reasonable then, that you shou'd be willing to be *his*, and to become *his* by your own Act and Deed.

2. This Command, *Give God your Hearts*, is his *first* and *great Commandment*: It is the main thing that God insists on; what he wou'd have you to do in the first place.

God will have no respect at all to any Service that you offer up to him, as long as you with-hold your Hearts from him. You may as well think to build a House without laying a Foundation, as to serve God, and be really Religious in any respect, without giving your Hearts to him: For this, as has been hinted, is the *Foundation* of all Religious Practice. Your *Sabbaths*, and *calling of Assemblies*, and *most solemn Meetings*, are *Iniquity*; when ye spread forth your hands, God will hide his eyes from you; yea, when ye make many Prayers, he will not hear; where this Command, *Give me thine Heart*, is not obey'd. So that you may even as well resolve, not to do any thing in Religion, not to Pray, not to Hear, not to Read, not to do your Duty in any one Instance of it, as resolve not to do *this*. For while *this* is neglected, the doing of other things will be to no purpose.

3. This Commandment is good: *Lo this* (the giving your Hearts to God) *we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know* Job 5. 27. *thou it, for thy good.* It is good for *Youth, good for Children, good for All, to give God their Hearts.* It is their Interest, and therefore their Wisdom, to do the Will of God in this respect. But this brings us to another Head of Arguments.

2dly, We may consider the Text as a *Counsel, or Advice.* Solomon, the wisest of Men, gives this Counsel to *Youth*, Let God have your Hearts: But which is more, God himself counsels you to this; for Solomon spake by *Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.* He, who is the *Father of Lights, the Fountain of Wisdom, out of whose Mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding,* thus counsels you. Do any of you think you know better than God, what is for your good? Will you *reject the Counsel of God,* and *lean to your own Understanding?* Has God *established the World by his Wisdom, and founded the Earth by his Discretion?* And shall *Vain Men, shall Young Men, shall Children* think that they are wiser than God?

Let me observe concerning this Counsel, which God gives us in the Text. First, that it is *safe*; we commonly say, *In the Multitude of Counsellors there is safety*; tho' this is not a general Rule, without its Exceptions: But in *God's Counsel,* there is always safety. *This is a Fountain of Life, to depart from the Snares of Death. He that walketh uprightly, according to this Counsel, walketh surely. Discretion shall preserve him, Understanding shall keep him. Whoso hearkeneth unto it, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of Evil.* None so *safe* as those who have given themselves to God.

Their *Souls* are in *safe hands*; they have committed *them* to God, and they know whom they have

have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed unto him against that day. He will keep them by his Power, through Faith unto Salvation, 1 Pet. 1. 5.

Their Bodies also are in safety: God gives his Angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways: No evil shall befall them; Ps. 91. 10, 11. no Plague shall come nigh them, but what shall in the end be for their greater good. And tho' Death shall feed on them, and their Beauty shall consume in the Grave; they shall be raised in Power, and fashioned like unto Christ's Glorious Body. 1 Cor. 15. 4. And Phil. 3. 21. God will guide them with his Counsel, in the management of their Affairs in the World; they shall be order'd in a wise and gracious manner. All things shall work together for good, to them that give their Hearts to God. Rom. 8. 28.

But such as have not done this, are far from safety: When they shall say Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction cometh upon them, as Travail upon a Woman with Child, and they shall not escape. How can we be safe, when God is our Enemy; when his Law has condemn'd us to Hell, and when we know not how soon the Sentence may be put in Execution? Do you bless your selves in your Hearts, saying, I shall have Peace, tho' I do not give my self to God, the Lord will not spare you; but the Anger of the Lord, and his Jealousie shall smoke against you; and the Lord shall separate you unto evil; and all the Curses, that are written in the Book of the Law, shall lie upon you. Deut. 29. 19, 20.

Secondly, This Counsel of God, to give him our Hearts, is Profitable: In following it there is great Reward. It is good for us to walk by God's Counsels; when we set them at nought, we forsake our own Mercies.

None

None so happy, as those that have given God their Hearts. Say ye to such, that it shall be well with them: For they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings; and that both in this World, and in the other. Godliness (which in this they lay the Foundation of) is Profitable unto all things; having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. Come, ye Children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the Fear of the Lord. Who is there of you that loveth Life, and wou'd see good Days? let him give his Heart unto God: For the Eyes of the Lord are upon such as do this; and his Ears are open unto their Cry. They cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their Troubles. O taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the Man that gives God his Heart. When his Flesh and Heart faileth, God will be the Strength of his Heart, and his Portion for ever. His Heart may be glad, and his Glory rejoice; his Flesh also shall rest in hope: For he will not leave his Soul in Hell; but shew him the Path of Life; and in God's Presence, he shall have fulness of Joy; and at his right hand, Pleasures for evermore. Thus shall it be done unto those that give their Hearts unto God. Oh! Let not any of you be such Fools, and so slow of heart to believe the Truth of these things, as to reject the Counsel of God against your selves. For he is faithful that promised: And not one word shall fail, of all his good Promises.

3dly, The Text may be consider'd as an earnest Suit, or Request: My Son, GIVE me thine Heart. God beseeches Young Persons, to give him their Hearts. The Thought is astonishing. May we not say within our selves; 'If I give God my Heart, what will it profit him? what advantage will it be to him?'

or

or what receives he of mine hand? What signifies the Service of such a poor Creature as I am, to him, who has the whole Host of Heaven, all the mighty Angels at his Beck? And does he sue to me for it? What infinite Grace! what amazing Condescension is this! *Is this the manner of Man, O Lord God? Whence is this to me,* that the great God, whose is the Earth, and the Fulness thereof, shou'd sue to me for my Heart? For the greatest Monarch on Earth, to become a Suitor to the meanest Beggar, in the filthiest Rags, and most loathsome Circumstances, is but a faint Resemblance of this Grace and Condescension, God shews in suing to you? And will you deny him? Shall his Suit be in vain? Shall he not have your Hearts?

Let me observe here,

1st, How *Importunate* God is in this matter!

Have you not given him a flat and peremptory Denial, one time after another? and yet (like a Passionate Lover) he will take no Answer; he will not be put off: He passes by many Sights and Affronts, you have been guilty of, and renews and continues his Suit; and waits for a more favourable opportunity, to see if you will consent to his Proposals another time. *He is long-suffering to you-ward, not willing that you shou'd perish,*

but come to Repentance. He waits, that 2 Pet. 3. 9.

he maybe Gracious unto you; waits, that he Hos. 11. 8.

may have Mercy upon you. Is not this his

Language? *How shall I give thee up? how shall I deliver thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?*

Mine Heart is turned within me; my Repentings are kindled together: I know not how to do it. O that

thou would'st hearken to my Voice! As I Live,

I have no pleasure in thy Death, but that thou turn from thy way and live: Turn thee, turn

thee from thy evil ways; for why wilt Ezek. 33. 11.

thou die. Thus God pleads with you

in

in his *Word*, by his *Spirit*, and by his *Ministers*; and do not his *Providences*, many times, speak the same Language? Consider

2dly, With what melting, moving *Arguments*, God backs and enforces his Suit. Consider

What great things he does offer you in return for your Hearts. Give him but your *Hearts*, and he will give you *Himself* for your *Portion*; his *Son* for your *Saviour*; his *Spirit* for your *Sanctifier* and *Comforter*; his *Power* shall protect you; his *Wisdom* shall guide you; his *Goodness* and *Mercy* shall supply all your *Wants*; his *Promises* shall be your *Heritage*; your *Sins* shall be all pardoned; your *Persons* justified; and you shall be number'd amongst his *Children*; and if *Children*, then *Heirs*; *Heirs* of God, and joint *Heirs* with *Christ*, of a *Glorious* and *Everlasting Inheritance*; which you shall be brought to the Possession of, when you are of *Age*; made meet for it. Consider also

What terrible things he threatens you with, in case of Refusal. Thus it shall be, if you are willing; but if you refuse, be it at your peril. If God may not have your Hearts, he'll be your avowed *Enemy*. He'll set his face a-

Deut. 28. 16. gainst you for evil; his *Curse* shall be upon you, and lie upon you in every State. You can have no true *Peace* and *Comfort* in this World, and *Snares* (or quick *Burning Coals*)

Fire and *Brimstone*, and an horrible Tempest, shall be the *Portion* of your *Cup* in the other. So that God does set before you the *Way of Life*, and the *Way of Death*; choose you which you will walk in. Thus does he enforce his Suit.

And now what shall I say more? For God's SAKE, that his *End* in *Creating* you, in *Preserving* you, and in *Sparing* you, may be answer'd; that he may have some *Service* from you; some

Return

Return for all his Love and Kindness to you, Give him your Hearts.

For CHRIST'S SAKE, that his Blood may not be shed in vain, as to you; that he may see of the Travail of his Soul, and be satisfied; that his Inheritance and Possession may be enlarged, Give God your Hearts.

For the SPIRIT'S SAKE, that his Grace may not be received in vain; that his Motions may no more be resisted; that he may no longer be grieved and vexed, Give God your Hearts.

For the NATION'S SAKE, that you may make up the Hedge, and stand in the Gap before God for the Land, that he shou'd not destroy it, Let him have your Hearts.

For the SAKE OF YOUR MINISTERS, Give God your Hearts. If when we have preach'd to others, we our selves are not Cast-aways, those whom we have been instrumental of persuading to do this, will be our Joy and our Crown, at the Coming of the Lord Jesus, and make us shine with the greater Lustre in the Kingdom of Heaven.

For the SAKE OF YOUR Religious PARENTS and FRIENDS, that your Father and Mother may be glad, and she that bare thee may rejoice; and that all that long for your Welfare, may have joy of you, Give God your Hearts.

And Lastly, For YOUR OWN SAKES, Give God your Hearts. Wou'd you be happy now; happy hereafter; happy in Life; happy in Death; happy to all Eternity: Let God have your Hearts. By the Mercies of God, I beseech you to do this: And knowing the Terrors of the Lord, I wou'd fain persuade you.

Think, O think of what has been laid before you! Earnestly beg of God to set it home on your Minds, and make you feel the force of it.

And if you have any Inclination, any Desire to be the Lord's, fall in with it immediately; *give not Sleep to thine Eyes, nor Slumber to thine Eye-lids*, till thou hast put the Thoughts of thine Heart into Action, and hast given thy self unto God.

Let not those that are *Young*, let not the *Youngest* be saying, That it is time enough to think of *giving themselves* to God, a Year or two hence; or a Month, or Week or two hence, will better suit them for the doing of this, than the present Season; another time they shall be more at leisure for this, than they are now. If you are got no farther than this, I have little hopes what I have said will serve to any good purpose. If this Work be put off, 'tis ten thousand to one but 'tis never done.

The same Objections that you make against doing it now, will be as strong, nay, in all Probability, stronger another time. Whatever may be pretended, the true Reason of all your Delays, is the *Lusts* of your own Heart; and the longer *this* is delay'd, the greater the Power of your Lusts will be. The more we are *accustomed to do evil*, the greater difficulty we shall find in learning to *do good*.

Besides, you have no Lease of your Lives, and if you put off the giving your Hearts unto God, you may die before the time comes that you set for the doing it. And what a sad case wou'd you be in, if God shou'd *require your Souls of you*, before you have committed them to him.

Or the *Spirit of God* may leave you to your selves; your *Consciences* may be sear'd with an hot Iron, and you may be *past Feeling*; and not so much as think of giving your selves to God. You cannot but be sensible, that there are Thousands in the World that have not the least Desire to be his; Time was
when

when this was your Case ; and why may it not be so again ? Is it not very likely that it shou'd be so, when you are grieving and provoking the *Spirit* ? to whose Motions, the Desires you now have, are all owing.

Farther, *The Younger* you are, *the better*. *Youth* is more proper for this Work, than *Age*. If you give your selves to God in your Youth, you will have less difficulty in doing this, than others meet with. You'll not have so many Sins to repent of ; not such strong Habits of Lust to be broken off, as others have ; your Hearts are not so hard as theirs, who have liv'd longer in Sin ; and the *Spirit's Work* will go on more kindly in you, than in them.

And to do this now, in your *Youth*, will be better taken, than to put it off to more advanced Years. God loves the *first Fruits* ; 'tis pleasing to him, to see *Young* ones, to see *Children* giving him their Hearts. The *Kindness* of their *Youth* shall be remembred, and shall not lose its *Reward*. The Younger you are when you give your selves to God, the Fairer you bid for the choicest of his Blessings, and the greatest Portion of them ; the Happier you are like to be in this World, the greater Glory you are like to have in the other, and in the more *Triumphing* a manner are you like to pass to it.

And is it thus ! (as certainly it is) Say not that you are *too Young* to give your selves unto God, but *arise and be doing*. It is a Remarkable Day ; the Beginning of a New Year ; a Day in which some use to give Gifts to their Friends ; a very fit Day indeed to give your Hearts unto God. You can take no surer way to have a *happy New Year*.

God knows what great Changes we may see before this Year is run out, if we shou'd live to the end of it. Many Persons do fear some terrible *Judgments* are coming upon us. The *Pestilence*, that *wasteth at Noon-day*, is taking its Progress ; the

Guards

Guards that have been set, in other Countries, to keep the Passes against it, have not been able to stay it: God knows how soon it may cross the Seas, and invade us. If he speaks but the Word, it is done. But let this, or any other sore Judgment, come upon us, give your selves unto God; and I am sure, however it fares with others, it will be well with you. Come what will, you'll be taken care of. God has his *Chambers*, in which to

hide those that are his, for a little moment, until the Indignation be overpast: *Isai. 26. 20.*

And either he will deliver you from the common Calamity, covering you with his Feathers, and under his Wings; or if you, with others, are a Prey to it, you shall be comforted and supported under it; as your Day is, so shall your Strength be; and it shall work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.

F I N I S.